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ABSTRACT

A survey of 148 rural independent, multigrade elementary school districts in Montana examined how districts compensate their teachers and whether or not that compensation has kept pace with larger school districts. The results indicate that rural school teachers in many cases work for less money than any other group of teachers in the state. Only about 43 percent receive the traditional rural benefit of a teacherage (housing), and about 43 percent (though not quite the same group as those with a teacherage) provide janitorial services along with their professional responsibilities. Only 39 percent of the teachers receive some sort of health insurance package. With regard to leaves, 60 percent receive some professional leave, 97 percent receive some sick leave, and 89 percent have some personal leave. Appendix A provides a copy of the survey, and Appendix B lists the names of rural schools responding to the survey. (KS)

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THE RURAL TEACHER, ALIVE AND WELL?

THE 1992-93 MONTANA RURAL TEACHER SALARY & BENEFITS SURVEY

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by
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RC 019130

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INTRODUCTION

Some years ago the Rural Education Center of Western Montana College of The University of Montana did a rural teachers salary survey. Unfortunately, no copy existed in the files to guide this study. Therefore, the method and the questions for the current work were developed specifically for this effort.

Now that a format has been established, it is hoped that this study can be repeated on a regular basis of perhaps every five years, and that over time a comprehensive work can be developed in this area. The purpose of the study was to provide the county superintendents of schools with useful information so that they could provide their teachers and their school boards with appropriate direction in the area of salary and benefit negotiations. It is hoped that the study does fulfill that purpose.

This publication represents the work of many people. First of all the author wishes to thank the many county superintendents of schools who took time from their busy schedules to fill out the survey. Secondly, the computer people at WMC, particularly David Briggs and Shaun Scott, worked through several manipulations of the data to get them into understandable states and their work is appreciated. Bob Flesch, a student at WMC, is to be commended for providing the tables on pages four through seven. Finally, a very special thanks must go to Phyllis Anderson of the Rural Education Center, who works tirelessly and cheerfully to make this and all the publications coming from the Center clear and attractive.

The author perhaps learned the most from doing this study, and in doing it gained new respect for the professionals in the rural schools of Montana who give so much for so little.

Dr. Claudette Morton, Director
Rural Education Center

THE RURAL TEACHER, ALIVE AND WELL?

1992-93 MONTANA RURAL TEACHER SALARY & BENEFITS SURVEY

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THE RURAL TEACHER, ALIVE AND WELL?
THE
1992-93 MONTANA RURAL TEACHER
SALARY & BENEFITS SURVEY

DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY

Montana, a vast land area with sparse population, still has many rural schools where teachers work independent of day-to-day administrative supervision and teach in multigrade elementary settings. In an effort to determine how these rural schools compensate their teachers and if that compensation has kept pace with teachers in larger school districts, the Rural Education Center at Western Montana College of The University of Montana decided to do a study. The schools included in this study were multigrade elementary independent districts which are supervised by the County Superintendents of Schools in Montana. There are 158 such schools currently operating in Montana. Of that number, 82 are schools with fewer than two full time teachers. This study was done at the request of the Montana Association of County Superintendents and these results will be shared with them at their annual state conference.

In the fall of 1992 surveys were sent, one per school, to each County Superintendent. (See Appendix A, page 15.) A variety of reminders were used and the results were compiled mid-December. Responses from 148 schools were received in time to be used in the analysis, and they are listed in Appendix B, page 16. This is a return rate of almost 94 percent.

One item of interest was that, as the survey was compiled, it was found that there are some popular names for rural schools in Montana. There are three Cottonwood Schools, two Jackson Schools, and two Spring Creek Schools.

GENERAL ANALYSIS

The first question asked of the schools was "Do you have a salary schedule?". Of those responding, 33 said that they had a salary schedule and 115 said they did not. Of those with a salary schedule, the lowest annual salary in this school year is $15,300 and the highest is $34,135. For those schools without a teacher's salary schedule, their lowest annual salary is $11,309 and the highest is $29,968.

Looking more in depth at the salary issue, only nine schools pay any teachers an annual salary of $30,000 or more. One school pays the low of $11,309, three schools pay teachers a minimum of $13,000, and 25 schools pay

at least some of their teachers less than $15,000 for an annual salary for a full time nine month contract.

Next, the survey looked at benefits. The first category of benefits was that group typically thought of as being a part of rural school teaching. The first question in this part was "Does the school district provide a teacherage?". Sixty-three said that they do provide a teacherage and 85 responded that they do not. Of the 63 which provide a teacherage, the average value of rent per month is $171.85. For those school districts which provide a teacherage, 52 also pay utilities. For those which do not provide a teacherage, it was asked if they provided mileage. Only nine schools, of the 148, do but it was not clear in most cases whether it was a per mile amount or a flat amount for the year.

One unique task for some rural school teachers is providing janitorial duties. The survey asked "Do you expect your teacher(s) to do janitorial duties?" and "If yes, to what extent?". Sixty-three schools expected their teachers to perform janitorial duties and the breakdown was as follows:

1 school expects the teacher to do 10% of the janitorial duties;
16 schools expect their teachers to do 25% of the janitorial duties;
5 schools expect their teachers to do 50% of the janitorial duties;
13 schools expect their teachers to do 75% of the janitorial duties; and
28 schools expect their teachers to do 100% of the janitorial duties.

The third part on the survey covered the area of health insurance. Fifty-seven schools provide health insurance and ninety-one schools do not. Types of insurance coverage included fifty-seven medical, twelve dental, seven vision, four other, and two life. As for the coverage, a variety of programs exist. Thirty-three schools pay 100 percent, and the premiums for health insurance paid by the districts range from $111.72 to $248 a month. Of those school districts which do not provide health insurance directly, 25 do provide a dollar amount toward individual insurance and that amount averages $1,018 a year.

The last area discussed in the survey had to do with leaves. Of the 148 schools which responded, 143 provide sick leave and the average number of days per year for sick leave is 8.10. One hundred thirty-two schools provide personal leave, though the average number of days per year is much less--2.60. Eighty-nine schools provide professional leave with the average number of days per year at 3.47. Ten schools have a specific bereavement leave which ranges in time from two to five days, six districts have emergency leave, and one has medical leave. Ten districts have 3 to 10 days leave for the teacher to use as he/she wishes, but usually with board approval. Eighteen of the schools allow teachers to use personal and sick leave interchangeably. One school even has two observation

days where the teachers can go and see successful programs in other schools. Ten schools buy back some or all unused days, and those buy backs range from $35 to $40 a day.

Other miscellaneous benefits listed by school districts on the survey included free lunch at one school, a $50 IRA account at another, and stipends for teachers to go back to college by three schools.

ANALYSIS BY GROUPS

For ease of analysis and understanding, the 148 districts were broken into five groups based on the lowest salaries they pay teachers. Group One, the lowest group, includes 30 districts which pay teachers from $11,309 to $15,000 with an average salary for the group of $14,119. Group Two includes 29 districts and is made up of those schools which pay teachers from $15,080 to $16,000 with an average salary for this group of $15,594. Group Three, or the middle group, includes 30 districts and the salaries range from $16,000 to $17,132 with an average salary of $16,642. Group Four includes 29 districts with a salary range of $17,150 to $18,432 and an average of $17,785. Finally, Group Five, or the highest group, is made up of 30 school districts and has a salary range of $18,500 to $25,000 with an average for the group of $20,177. Note that in schools which have two or more full time teachers there are some teachers paid from $25,000 to $34,135. However, the attached tables and analyses reflect all 148 school districts in the survey and give a clear picture of the lowest salaries paid or, in the case of 82 of the districts, one-teacher schools, the only full time salary paid. In addition, this analysis shows a comparison of benefits.

Four tables are presented on the following pages. Table One (page 4) shows a comparison of average salaries for each group. Table Two (page 5) shows the number of schools in each group which provide teacherages. Table Three (page 6) shows the number of schools in each of the five groups which provide health insurance as well as those which provide dollar amounts for teachers to buy their own insurance. The final table, Table Four (page 7), shows the number of schools in each of the five groups which provide professional, sick and personal leaves for their teachers.

TABLE ONE

Montana Rural Teachers Survey

1992 - 93

Average Salaries Paid by Group

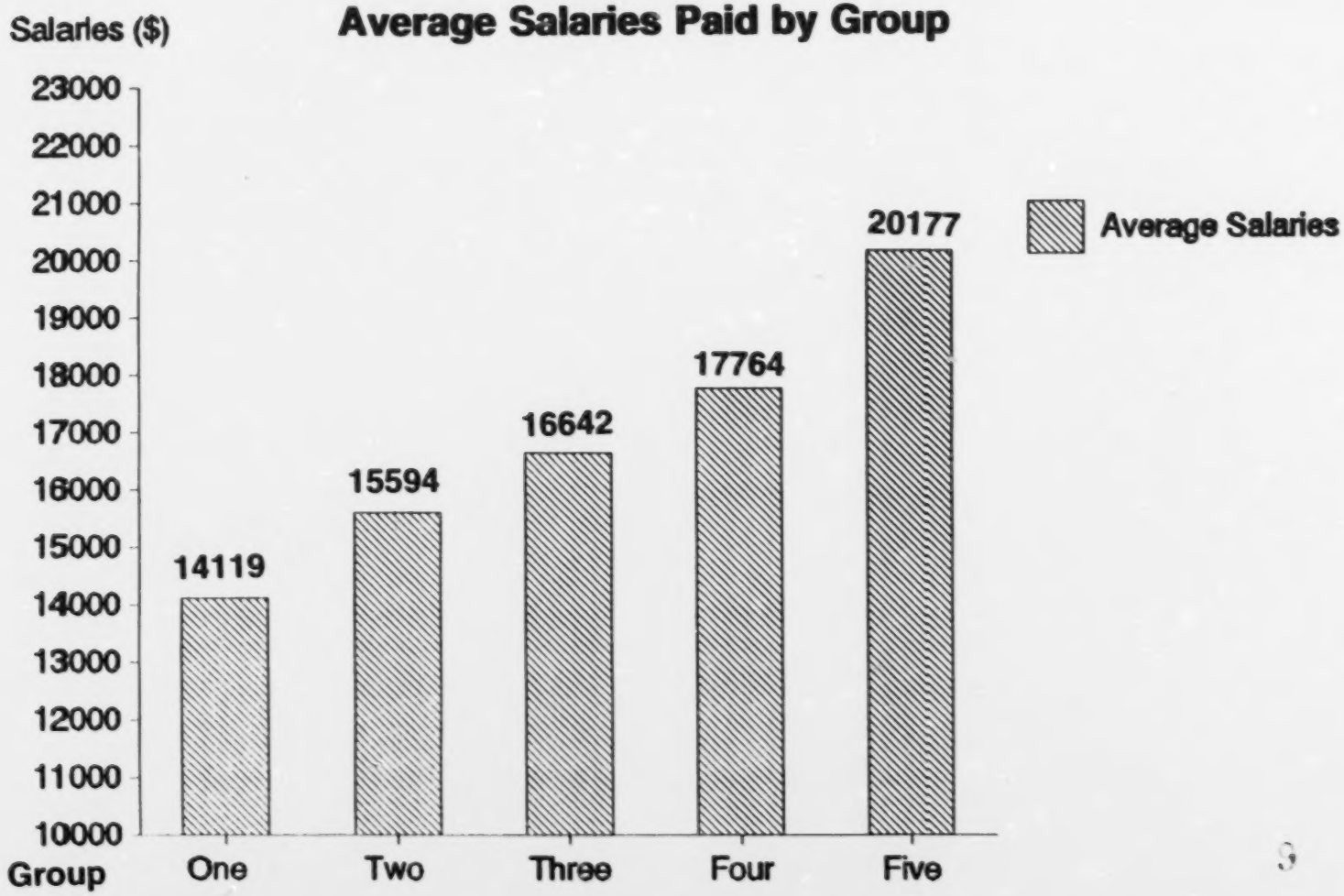


TABLE TWO

Montana Rural Teachers Survey
1992-93
Number of Schools in each Group which Provide Teacherages

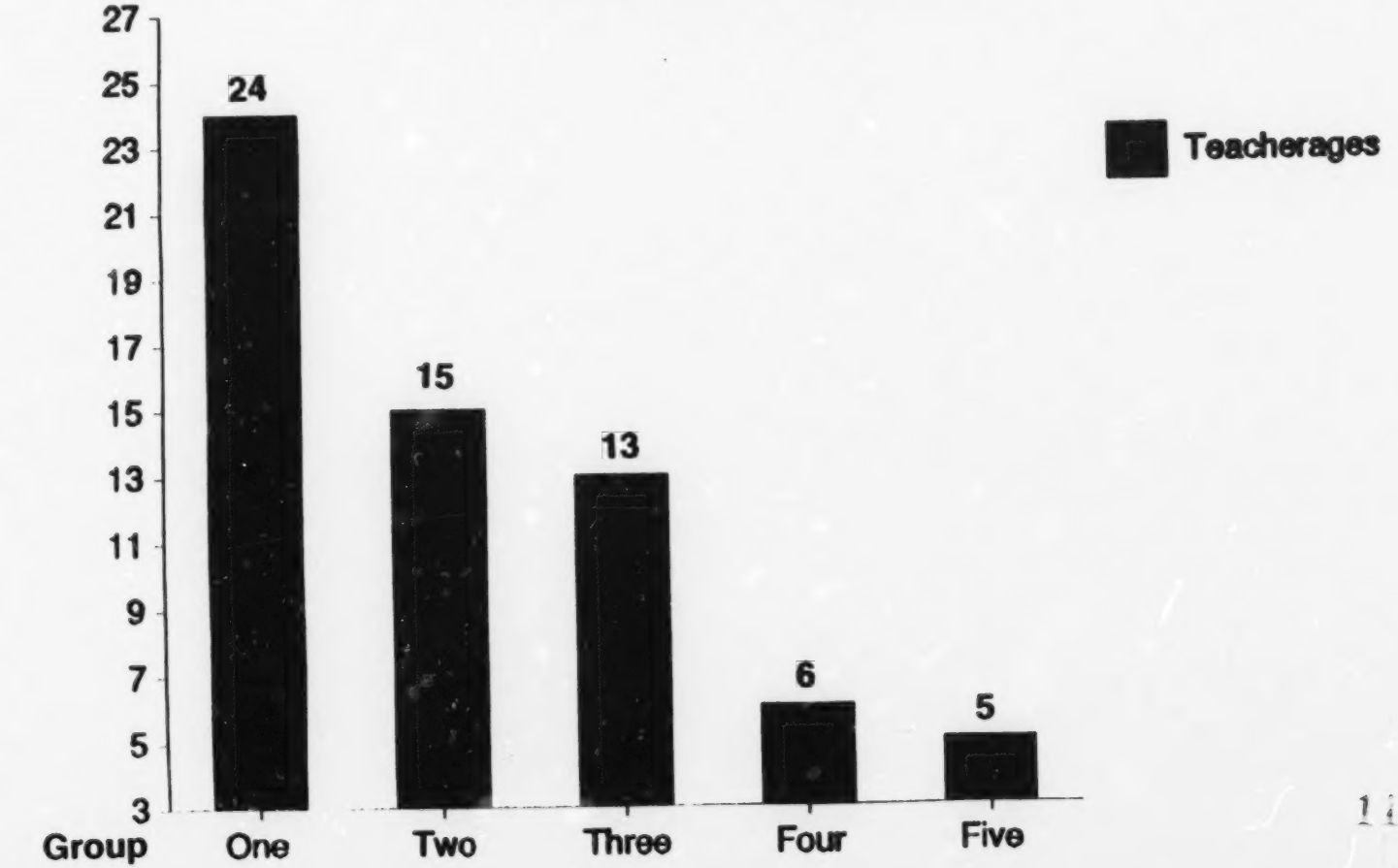


TABLE THREE

Montana Rural Teachers Survey
1992-93

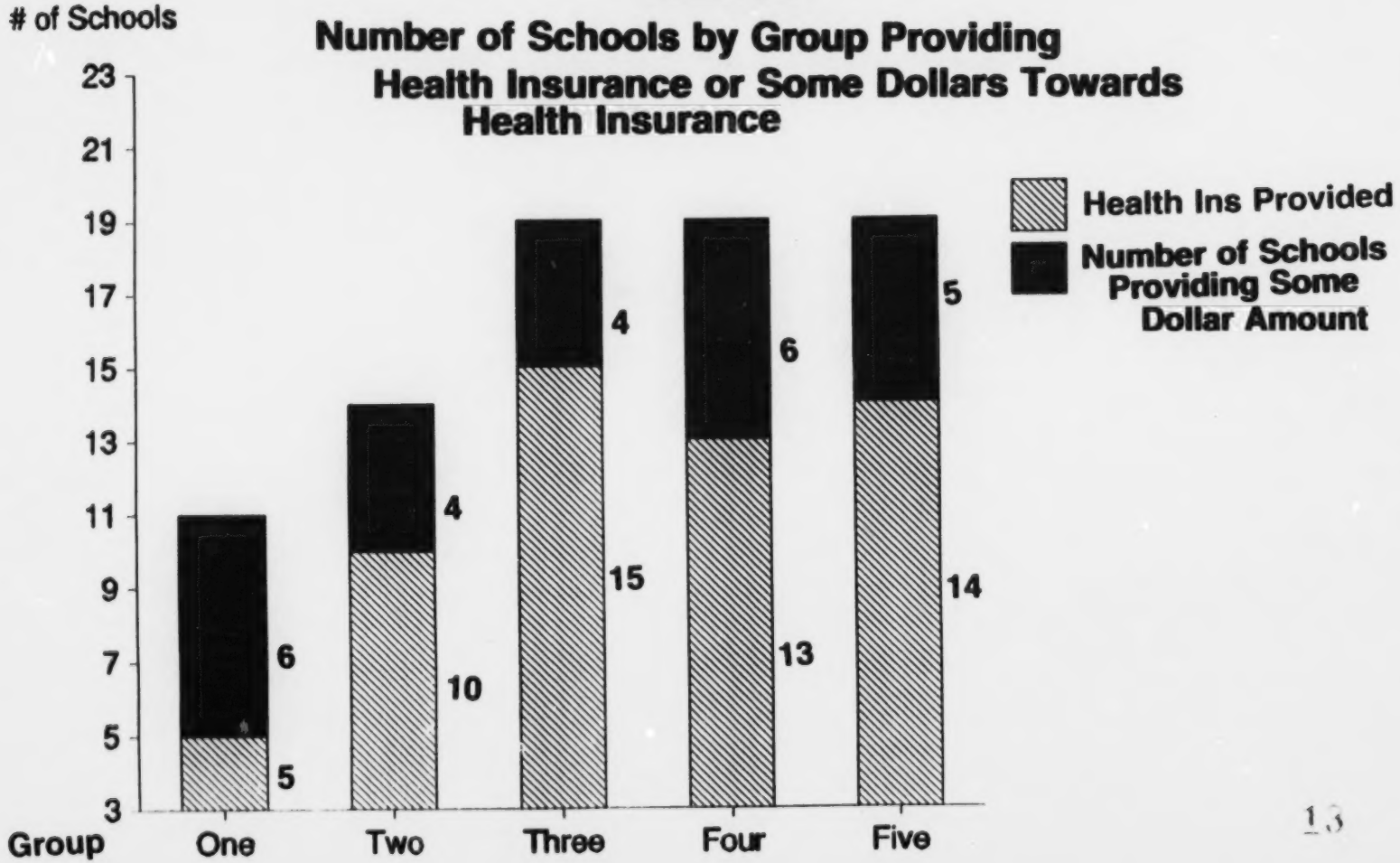
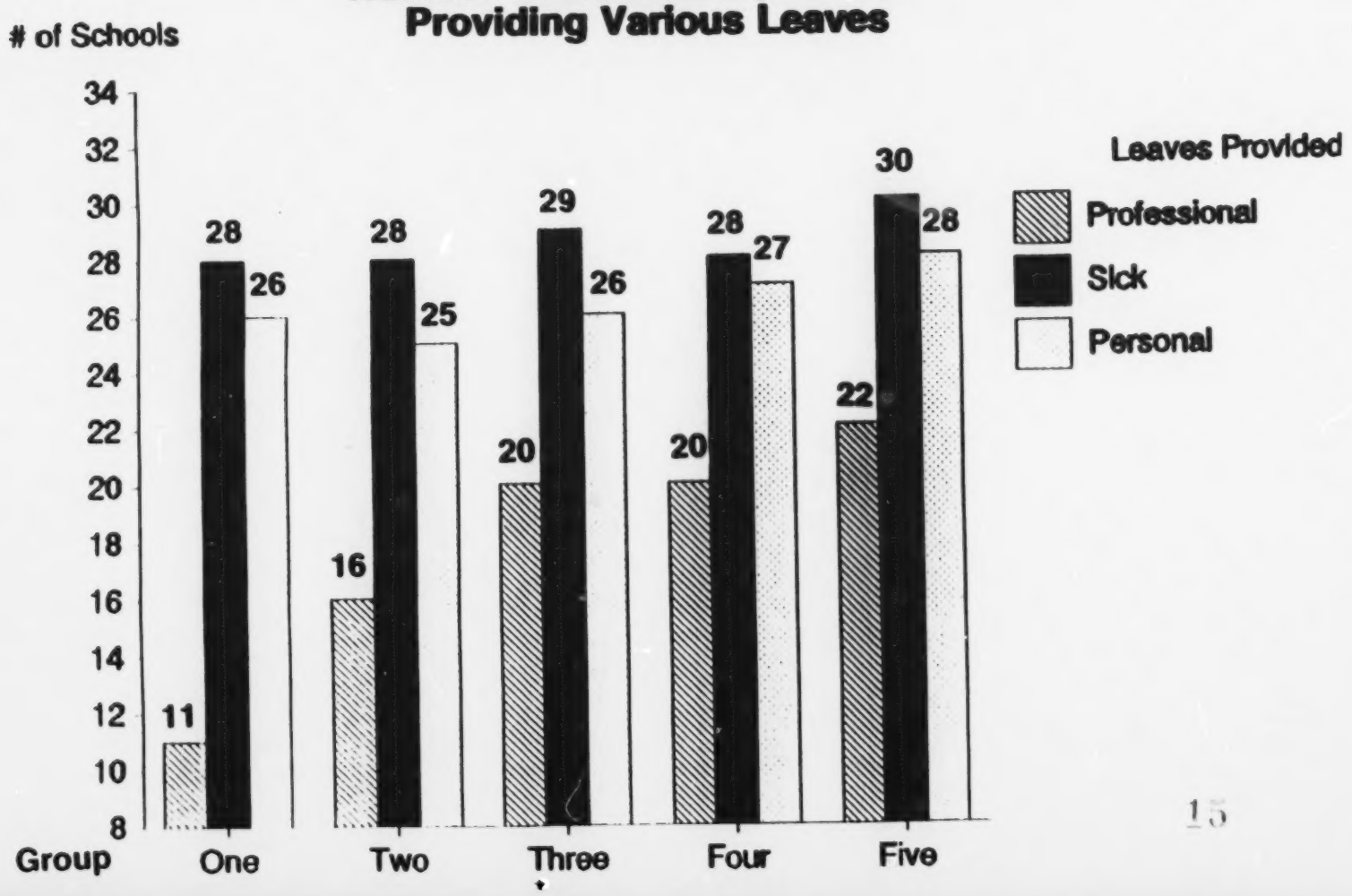


TABLE FOUR

Montana Rural Teachers Survey
1992-93
Number of Schools By Group Providing Various Leaves



In order to get a deeper understanding of the relationships of salaries and other compensation, three of the groups will be discussed in more detail.

GROUP ONE--LOWEST SALARIED SCHOOLS

As stated earlier, this group is made up of the 30 lowest salaried school districts which pay some or all of their teachers $15,000 or less in annual salaries. However, 24 of those districts also provide a teacherage and 23 pay the utilities. Of those six which don't provide a teacherage, two of the schools do provide mileage.

In looking at this group's expectations with regard to janitorial duties, 10 expect the teacher to do 100 percent of the janitorial duties and one of them does pay the teacher an addition $800 for this service. Two school districts expect the teacher to do 75 percent of the janitorial duties, two expect the teacher to do 50 percent of the janitorial duties, and four expect the teacher to do 25 percent of the janitorial duties. Five more schools in this category, while not assigning a percentage to the janitorial tasks, do expect the teacher to perform some "with student assistance."

With regard to health insurance for this group, it is worth noting that 25 of these 30 lowest salaried schools provide no health insurance for their teachers. Besides the five which do provide insurance coverage, another six provide annual dollar amounts toward insurance ranging from $120 to $1,200 a year. As to specific types of insurance, two provide "major medical/hospitalization only", one provides 100 percent medical coverage by the district, and one did not respond to the insurance items on the questionnaire.

Eleven of the 30 school districts provide professional leave and these leaves range from 1 to 10 days. Twenty-eight provide sick leave ranging from 2 to 10 days, and 26 provide personal leave ranging from 2 to 9 days.

Finally, one last item of note for this group is that none of these thirty school districts have a salary schedule.

GROUP THREE--MIDDLE SALARIED SCHOOLS

Group Three also represents 30 school districts. In this case the salaries in this group range from $16,000 to $17,132 with an average of $16,642. Seven schools are on a salary schedule, 13, or fewer than half, provide a teacherage, 9 provide utilities, and 2 provide mileage if they don't provide a teacherage. This is 11 fewer teacherages than in Group One but the same number of schools providing mileage.

Only 13 schools expect teachers to do any janitorial duties. Of those, five expect their teachers to do 100 percent, five expect their teachers to do 75 percent, and three expect their teachers to do 25 percent.

Fifteen of the school districts in this middle group provide health insurance for their teachers and one has life insurance coverage as well. An additional, four districts provide dollar amounts ranging from $500 to $1,500 toward health insurance for their teachers.

Twenty of these districts provide professional leave ranging from one to seven days, 29 provide sick leave ranging from one to twelve days, and 26 provide personal leave ranging from one to five days.

GROUP FIVE--HIGHEST SALARIED SCHOOLS

This group's salaries range from $18,500 to $25,000 with an average of $20,177, and nine in this group have salary schedules.

As to the "traditional" rural benefits, only five of these 30 districts provide a teacherage, and all five provide utilities as well. Again, two school districts provide mileage for their teachers. This is the same number as in the low and middle groups.

Only seven of the schools in this group of 30 have expectations for teachers to perform janitorial duties and of those only one expects them to do 100 percent, one to do 75 percent, one to do 50 percent, three to do 25 percent, and one to do 10 percent.

Fourteen school districts provide health insurance coverage for their teachers, one less than the middle group. However, five provide a dollar amount toward health insurance. This dollar amount ranges from $175 to $2,900.

Twenty-two of the districts provide professional leave ranging from one to seven days, 30 or all of them provide sick leave ranging from five to twenty days, and 28 provide personal leave of from one to six days.

CONCLUSION

Salaries

The issue of salaries has to be looked at in the context of what other school districts in Montana pay teachers. From this study it was found that rural independent, multigrade elementary school districts are paying their teachers salaries from a low of $11,309 to a high of $34,135. Each year three other studies are done in Montana which contain teacher salary information. Those studies are: The Class "C" Survey 1992-93, Class B Schools Survey, 1992-93, and Budget Survey, Class A/AA Montana Schools, 1992 - 1993. According to the first source, Class C Schools, that is the rural K-12 school districts which vary in size from 56 to 484 students (5-6), pay their teachers a low salary of $15,700 (77) to a high of $40,175 (78). According to the second source, Class B Schools, those K-12 districts with A.N.B. enrollments of 329 to 1,028 (3) pay their teachers a base of $15,900 (13) to a high of $45,460 (17), and, according to the third source, Class A and AA Schools, those with A.N.B. enrollments of 1,714 to 14,864 (1), pay their teachers from a base of $16,744 [91-92 figure] (16) to a high of $50,196 (18). According to the Montana Education Association the overall average Montana teacher's salary for 1991-92, the last year for which they have figures, is $27,513. This puts Montana 42nd in the nation for teacher's salaries. From this last information, it is clear that Montana teachers are paid in the lowest fifth of the nation's teachers and, looking at the Montana information, the teachers in Montana's rural independent elementary districts are paid the least of any group of teachers in Montana.

No comparisons can be made of the different levels of salaries from the different size school districts based on experience and education, because these elements were not included in the studies. However, experience and education are considered in schools which have salary schedules and should be factored in when determining rural schools salaries.

Teacherages and Utilities

One plus that should be noted for some of the rural teachers are the teacherages provided. This particular benefit is somewhat unique to rural schools. In this study it was found that the average rent value of teacherages provided is $177.85 a month. For those teachers who are receiving the lowest salaries, $15,000 or less, but also are provided a teacherage at the average amount and who live there for only nine months, they have increased their compensation by over $1,500 annually. Then if utilities also are provided, even at a minimum average of $110 a month, at least another $1,000 can be added to that compensation. This now brings the average teacher with a salary of $14,119 in

Group One, the lowest group, to approximately $16,600 if they are provided a teacherage and utilities. Of course, six of the teachers in the Lowest Salary Group are not provided a teacherage and seven are not provided utilities, so they are clearly the lowest paid teachers in the state.

As can be seen from Tables One and Two, on pages 4 and 5 respectively, as salaries increase the benefit of teacherages and utilities decrease in inverse proportion.

Mileage

Because only nine schools reported paying their teachers mileage and there was inconclusive reporting of how mileage is paid, there can be no general conclusions drawn regarding this particular factor.

Janitorial Duties

There is one factor which could take away from the additional compensation represented by teacherages and that is the requirement of janitorial duties. It is interesting to note that 63 school districts provide teacherages for one or more of their teachers and 63 school districts expect their teachers to provide some janitorial duties. These are not all the same districts. However, 45 or 72% are the same. Janitorial duties for Class C schools are compensated at an average rate of $9.31 an hour (Morton 80), so school districts which expect their teachers to provide these tasks need to consider this in their pay plans.

Health Insurance

With regard to health insurance, 38.5 percent or 57 of the rural school districts provide some coverage for their teachers. Looking at Table Three on page 6, it is unfortunate to note that the lowest paid teachers also are the least likely to have health insurance. In Group One, the Lowest Salaried Schools, only 5 of the 30 districts or one-sixth provide health insurance. In Group Two, 10 or one-third provide health insurance, and in Groups Three and Five, 14 or almost half of the 30 school districts provide some health insurance coverage. In Group Four which has only 29 school districts, 13 districts provide some health insurance coverage. In the last three groups where teachers are paid more, almost half of the districts provide health insurance.

There is, of course, the question of coverage. In Group One, the Lowest Salaried Schools, two of the five districts provide major medical coverage and no

other kinds of special health coverage was noted. Two of the schools pay 100 percent of the policy, one pays $1,500 a year on the policy and the other three did not report what the split was.

In Group Two, one of the 10 school districts provides vision and dental as well as health coverage. With regard to the district/teacher split for paying for the insurance, eight of the districts pay 100 percent, one district pays $2,000 and the employee pays $700, and one district did not respond to this question.

In Group Three or the Middle Group, in addition to general health coverage, one district provides vision, four provide dental and one provides life insurance. Ten of the districts pay 100 percent of the premiums, one district pays nine percent of the teacher's salary, one district pays $130 a month, one district pays $175 a month, one district pays $250 a month, and in one district the employee pays the first $900.

In Group Four, 13 districts provide general health coverage, three provide vision, four dental and one life. As to the split for the Group Four schools, six pay 100 percent, with one of those paying it for single coverage specifically, one pays 50 percent, four pay dollar amounts per month ranging from $111 to $260, and two did not respond to this question.

In Group Five, the Highest Salaried Group, 14 school districts provide some form of general health insurance coverage for their teachers. In addition, two provide teachers with vision coverage and three provide dental coverage. With regard to the district contribution toward premiums, seven districts pay 100 percent, one district pays 75 percent, one pays 60 percent, one pays 50 percent and four districts pay dollar amounts per month ranging from $120 to $248.

Besides the 57 school districts which provide their teachers with some type of health insurance, another 16.9 percent or 25 provide dollar amounts ranging from a low of $50 to a high of $2,900 per year. In Group One, those dollar amounts for the six districts involved range from $120 to $1,200 a year with an average amount of $699. In Group Two, four schools provide dollar amounts ranging from $100 to $1,500 a year, with an average amount of $869. Group Three, or the middle group, also has four schools in this category, but they provide their teachers dollar amounts toward health insurance ranging from $500 to $1,500 with an average figure of $1,000. Group Four has six schools in this category which pay teachers dollar amounts ranging from $50 to $1,920 a year, with an average of $949. Finally, Group Five or the highest group, had five schools which pay teachers dollar amounts and those dollar amounts varied from a low of $175 to a high of $2,900 a year with an average amount of $1,650.

In conclusion, it is clear that once again the districts in the lowest salaried schools category provide their teachers with the least amount of health insurance and fewer of them offer any insurance to their teachers. While in the middle and top two groups, Groups Three, Four and Five, 63 percent of the districts provide their teachers either with health insurance coverage or dollar amounts to buy coverage of an average close to $1,000 a year per teacher. No comparison can be made in the area of insurance benefits with teachers in other sized Montana schools, because that information was not available to the researcher, however, it is generally understood that teachers in all the other sized school districts in Montana do have health insurance.

Leaves

The last benefits category examined was leaves for teachers. Looking at the first column in each of the groups on Table Four on page seven, it can be seen that there is a direct proportion of how many districts in each of the five categories offer professional leave to their teachers compared to the salaries they pay their teachers. Professional leave is offered from a low of eleven districts in Group One to a high of twenty-two districts in Group Five or twice as many districts offering professional leave. Of the total 148 school districts, 89 or 60 percent do provide professional leave.

This is not the case with regard to sick leave. The second column of each group on Table Four represents sick leave, and it can clearly be seen that the groups are much more consistent in providing sick leave for their teachers. Groups One, Two and Four each have 28 districts which provide sick leave, Group Two has all of its 29 districts and Group Five has all of its 30 districts providing sick leave for their teachers. In fact, only five districts of the total 148, or three percent, do not provide sick leave for their teachers.

The last column in each group on Table Four represents personal leave. While it is not quite as common a leave to be offered to rural school teachers as sick leave, it is still offered rather consistently across all groups. It is interesting to note that in this case Group Two is the low group offering personal leave in only 25 districts of its 29 districts. Groups One and Three have 26 districts which provide personal leave, Group Four has 27 districts which offer personal leave, and Group Five has 28 districts providing personal leave. Group Five, as has been noted before is the group which has the highest salaries, and here again it has the most districts offering personal leave. Only 18 districts out of the full 148, or 12 percent, don't offer their teachers any personal leave.

Some Final Points

It is clear that the citizens of Montana and the students in the rural independent, multigrade elementary school districts are getting a very good educational deal relative to the salaries and benefits they provide their rural school teachers. The rural school teachers are in many cases working for less money than any other group of teachers in the state, only about 43 percent of them are receiving the traditional rural benefit of a teacherage, and about 43 percent (though not quite the same group as those with a teacherage) are providing janitorial services along with their professional responsibilities. Only 39 percent of the teachers are receiving some sort of health insurance package. Finally, with regard to leaves, 60 percent receive some amount of professional leave, 97 percent are provided some amount of sick leave, and 89 percent have an amount of personal leave.

The title of this study is THE RURAL TEACHER, ALIVE AND WELL? The question should be answered in the context of the study--that is, salary and benefits. There was no attempt to determine job satisfaction or health in this study. There was also no attempt to determine length of service at a rural school. These may be subjects for further studies, and there might be some interesting correlations which could be shown. It will be left up to the readers to determine if the salary and benefits provided by the various rural elementary independent districts in this study would keep a professional educator alive and well.

RURAL SCHOOL TEACHER'S SURVEY

SCHOOL DISTRICT #_____

_____, _____
(School Name) (County)

Do you have a salary schedule?

If so, what is the lowest, the highest, and the average annual salaries actually paid?

Lowest -- _____
Highest -- _____
Average -- _____

If not, what is the current salary(ies) paid for the '92-'93 school year?

Lowest -- _____
Highest -- _____
Average -- _____

BENEFITS:

Does the school provide a teacherage? Yes___ No___
Value of rent of the teacherage? $_____ a month

Utilities? Yes___ No___

If not a teacherage, is there mileage? Yes___ No___
If so, how much per mile? $_____

Does the school provide health insurance? Yes___ No___
If yes, type of coverage (or split)? medical___
dental___ vision___ other_____
What is the split? (example, Employee 25/District 75) _____
If no, does it provide a dollar amount toward individual insurance? Yes___ No___ How much? $_____

LEAVES:

Professional Leave? Yes___ No___
If yes, how many days? _____

Sick Leave? Yes___ No___
If yes, how many days? _____

Personal Leave? Yes___ No___
If yes, how many days? _____

Any other benefits?

Do you expect your teacher(s) to do janitorial duties?
Yes___ No___
If yes, to what extent? (please circle) 25% 50% 75% 100%

APPENDIX B

RURAL SCHOOLS RESPONDING

Albion
Alder
Alzada
Amsterdam
Arrowhead
Auchard Creek
Avon
Ayers
Basin
Bear Paw
Belle Creek
Benzieh
Biddle
Big Dry Creek
Billup
Birney
Blackfoot
Bloomfield
Blue Creek
Boyd
Bridge
Brorson
Bynum
Camas Prairie
Canyon Creek
Cardwell Consol.
Carter
Cleveland
Coal Creek
Community
Cooke City
Cottonwood (Fergus)
Cottonwood (Gallatin)
Cottonwood (Hill)
Cottonwood, Knowlton, Locate
Craig
Davey
Dayton
Deer Creek
Deerfield
Divide
Dixon
Dupuyer
East Glacier
Edgar
Elder Grove
Elliston
Elysian
Fertile Prairie
Fort Peck Elem
Fortine
Galata
Garrison
Gildford Colony
Gold Creek
Golden Ridge
Grant
Grey Cliff
Hall
Hammond
Hawks Home
Helmville
Hiawatha
Horkan Creek
Independent
Jackson (Beaverhead)
Jackson (Carbon)
Johnston
King Colony
Kinsey
Kircher
Knees
Lamotte
Landusky
Lennep
Liberty
Lindsay
Lloyd
Loma
Lone Tree
Lustre
Luther
Maiden
Malmborg
McCormick
McLeod
Melrose
Melstone
Melville
Miami
Moon Creek
Mountain View
Musselshell
North Harlem
Olney & Bissell
Ovando
Paradise
Pass Creek
Pendroy
Peoples Creek
Pine Creek
Pine Grove
Pioneer
Pleasant Valley
Polaris
Prairie Elk
Rau
Raynesford
Reichle
Richland
Ridge
Ringling
Rock Springs
S. Stacey
Sand Springs
Second Creek
SH Elemen
Shawmut
Southview
Spring Creek (Custer)
Spring Creek (Fergus)
Springdale
Springhill
Squirrel Creek-Decker
Sunset
Swan Lake/Salmon
Swan River
SY Elem
Sylvanite
Trail Creek
Trego
Trinity
Trout Creek
Twin Buttes
Two Dot
Valley View
Van Norman
Vaughn
Vida
Warrick
West Glacier
Whitlash
Whitney Creek
Wisdom
Wise River
Wolf Creek
Yaak
Zurich

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